SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM : Sir, I have listened to the question. . .*(Interruptions)*

SHRIMATI KRISHNA BOSE : Sir, I cannot put my question through. . .*(Interruptions)*

MR. CHAIRMAN : The hon. Minister is replying. *(Interruptions)*

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM : If one produces a certificate to the effect that he is Matric passed or failed, that is enough; no further certificate is required for that. . . *(Interruptions)*

DR. RAM CHANDRA DOME : Sir, this is a very important question. You may please allow a half-an-hour discussion on this issue . .*(Interruptions)*

MR. CHAIRMAN : You may give a notice for half-an-four discussion.

WRITTEN ANSWER TO QUESTIONS

[Translation]

Production of Cotton

*384. SHRI SURENDRA YADAV :
SHRI NITISH KUMAR :

Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have assessed the production of cotton in the country during 1997-98;

(b) if so, the estimated production thereof;

(c) whether the domestic consumption of cotton in the country has also been assessed;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) the quantum of cotton proposed to be exported during the above period ?

THE MINISTER OF TEXTILES (SHRI R.L. JALAPPA) : (a) and (b) The crop estimate for 1996-97, as assessed by the Cotton Advisory Board (CAB) at its meeting held on February 24, 1997, is 160 lakh bales. The CAB has so far not assassed the production of cotton in the country during the cotton year 1997-98 (i.e. October 1997–September 1998) since it is too early and the sewings for cotton crop even in the northern states like Pubjab begins only from April/May onwards.

(c) and (d) For 1996-97, the total consumption has been assessed by the CAB to be 152.50 lakh bales. The CAB his not assessed so far the domestic consumption of cotton for 1997-98.

(e) The Government has not decided so far about the quantum of cotton to be allowed for export during 1997-98. According to the long term policy, five lakh bales of cotton are generally allowed for export at the beginning of the cotton season, with additional quotes being announced subsequantly, if required. Cotton export quotes are released after considering all relevant factors, including estimates of production, availability, consumption, likely exportable surplus, price trend, etc.

[English]

Trade Agreement with Pakistan and Bangladesh

*385. SHRI NITISH BHARADWAJ :
SHRI K.P. SINGH DEO :

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have decided to expand trade relations with Pakistan and Bangladesh;

(b) if so, whether any formal proposals have come from the above countries in this regard;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) whether any negotiations for liberalisation of trade with Pakistan and Bangladesh were held with the delegations of these countries recently; and

(e) if so, the details of agreements signed between India, Pakistan and Bangladesh ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH) : (a) to (e) It is Government's Policy to expand trade relations with all countries, including neighbouring countries like Pakistan and Bangladesh.

2. Under The aegis of SAARC Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA), the Inter-Governmental Group on Trade Liberalisation held talks to conclude the Second Round of Trade Negotiations. These talks were held in Colombo in March '96, Islamabad in September '96, New Delhi in October ,96 and Kathmandu in Novermber, 96 in which India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and other member countries of SAARC participated. Following the negotiations, member countries of SAARC have exchanged tariff concessions with each other on the basis of request lists of products identified for such concessions, and submitted by them.

3. India has granted tariff concessions on 513 tariff lines at 6 digit level to Bangladesh, which include inorganic/organic chemicals, articles, of leather, wood, paper/paper board, textiles, footwear etc. The concessions were granted at two rates;